PLAYS for the NEW YEAR'S NIGHTS

ESTELLE WINWOOD and CYRIL KEIGHTLEY in "THE LITTLE JOURNEY"

MARJORIE GATESON and WALTER CATLETT in "SIMPLICITY"

HELEN HAYES and WILLIAM GILLETTE in "DEAR BRUTUS"

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By LAWRENCE REAMER.

PROFESSORIAL observers of the metropolitan theatre now have opportunity to discover that vulgarity of the kind that offends them so deeply is not confined to the deplored musical play. No other form of theatrical entertainments, it may be mentioned, so deeply grieves these academic critics as the farce with music. Its responsibility for so much that is evil in American life and manners, in the broader sense of the word, lies heavily on their altruistic shoulders. It is plain that they don't like plays with music. The supply that could please them in their lighter moments ended with Gilbert and Sullivan. Plays with music are therefore but to be seen to be hated. And most playgoers take the precaution of seeing them first.

But not the professor who rails from a distance and so clearly discloses the criterion that determines the nature of all such criticism." I don't like it; therefore the other fellow should not like it. If he dares to I'll tell him just what sort of a lowbrow he is." So musical plays are anathema, and so are all those misguided citizens who crowd the playhouses to laugh at them. This is one of the singular characteristics of dramatic criticism, especially of that theoretical type in which the dear professors indulge. In the other arts, or in the enjoyment of current literature, it is not regarded as a mark of ignorance to enjoy what may not please the mandarins. But the spectator who confesses to finding musical plays the occasional source of innocent merriment must go down to his fate in company with the play. You must like what the professors like or they will treat you rough.

Practical value of this sort of professorial criticism is shown in a recent work which speaks enthusiastically of Edith Wynne Matthison's playing of *Death* in "Everyman." Now it is a matter of the commonest information that Miss Matthison's memorable performance was of *Everyman*, the hero, while Stanley Drewitt played *Death*, which was a purely incidental figure in the old morality, while Miss Matthison acted the long and dominating title role. This is but one instance of professorial observation at long range. It is moreover a characteristic of this kind of comment that the plays discussed are almost invariably read and not seen. This process may explain the generally futile event of this kind of criticism of the theatre. It may be learned but it is rarely founded on the right approach to the subject.

It is nevertheless true that the ingredients of popular musical farce that are accounted least tolerable are to be found to-day in plays without the gilded pill of music. "East is West" has, for instance, a heroine who is proud of the fact that she is called "a chicken" and is able to find plenty of men to respond to her significant winks. She longs for no other blessing of Western civilization so much as for the acquisition of the steps of a dance which is named in honor of a well known but more or less intimate article of feminine lingerie.

But this is not the only singular lack of manners in the play. When this heroine is transported to the house of a family of wealth she bullies the butler to such an extent that this anomalous personage in the household is led to ask if she is a servant or a guest. He is told that she is both; so the Oriental heroine—pseudo-Oriental, as she must inevitably be in a play that involves marriage with an American—continues to serve the cocktails to the family and eat the cherries out of the half finished glasses. Thoughtful playgoers might be led to fear the hygienic as well as the social peril of such a habit. There are some other traits of this heroine, such as juggling a crucifix in her prayers on the ground that the Chinese god had not "made good" in previous cases, that might be found unsuited to all tastes. But these examples are enough to show that the drama may in point of bad manners hold its own with the best of musical plays.

But bad manners are by no means confined to the play at the Astor. In Rita Wellman's interesting play "The Gentile Wife" the heroine, who wanted to be an opera singer, objects to the family of her husband. So she patronizes the women unhesitatingly, scarcely notices them in their social gatherings and otherwise by her own actions helps to give the audience a respect for them just as its toleration for the superior wife grows less and less. In "A Place in the Sun" the bad manners of the journalist, played by Cyril Harcourt, are frankly explained by the character as the result of his taste for drink and a general contempt for insincerity. But it is doubtful if he is in fact any less polite than the talkative visitor of the second act who hurls her opinions and epigrams at everybody without giving them the least opportunity to answer back or to indicate whether or not they are anxious to sit under these applications of her wit. But epigrammatic ladies on the stage are always rude. They will talk and allow nobody else to interrupt.

The bad manners which are revealed in "Forever After" are maybe less culpable since they are shown in a simpler civilization, although if they are really founded on kindness of feeling, manners ought to be as good in a bigosh drama as in a comedy of high life in London. The youthful hero does seem, however, condemned to stand a most disagreeable lot of ragging from various persons in the play because his father is not rich and he is not entitled to move in the highest circles of the village when they congregate early every evening before the popular ice cream soda fountain.

Even the simple little street sparrow of "Remnant," who sleeps on the steps of the Madeleine, soon learns after her translation to a higher grade of social life to speak her mind without considering the feelings of others. As a visitor to a fashionable home of the '40s in Paris she is, it is true, received by the host with a warmth that arouses her susicions. But it is not long before she is laying down the law to her new friends with as pontifical a manner as if she had known them all their lives and were of an age and position to speak to them just as she wanted to. She has a remedy for all their emotional worries. But she is only a few months this side of the boulevard gutters and might be more easily pardoned than some of her associates in the violation of the most ordinary rules of deportment which so often amuse the sophisticated spectators of the current drama. Indeed, one is no more led to wonder in her case than in that of some of the other offenders why authors should have attempted to write about anything that took place in such terra incognita as a drawing room, and, having accomplished this feat, should expect the socially informed to be other than rather amused at the result.

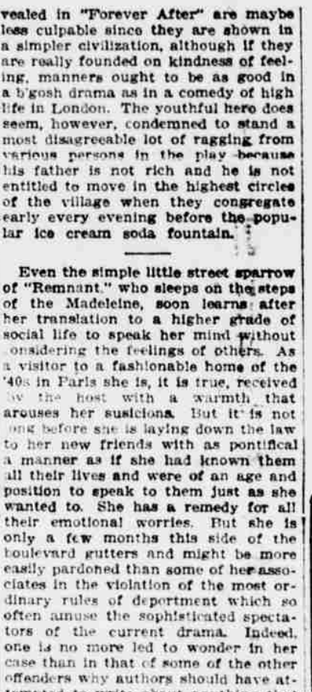
PLAYS THAT LAST.

Astor, "East Is West"; Belasco, "Tiger! Tiger!"; Belmont, "The Little Brother"; Bijou, "Sleeping Partners"; Booth, "Be Calm, Camilla"; Bramhall Playhouse, "Difference in Gods"; Broadhurst, "The Melting of Molly"; Casnio, "Some Time"; Central, "Somebody's Sweetheart"; Cohan, "A Prince There Was"; Cohan & Harris, "Three Faces East"; Comedy, "A Place in the Sun"; Cort, "The Better 'Ole"; Criterion, "Three Wise Fools"; Eltinge, "Under Orders"; Empire, "Dear Brutus"; Forty-eighth Street, "The Big Chance"; Forty-fourth Street, "Little Simplicity"; Fulton, "The Riddle: Woman"; Gaiety, "Lightnin'"; Globe, "The Canary"; Harris, "The Invisible Foe"; Henry Miller's, "Back to Earth"; Hudson, "Friendly Enemies"; Knickerbocker, "Listen Lester"; Lexington, "Attaboy"; Liberty, "Glorianna"; Little Theatre, "A Little Journey"; Longacre, "Nothing But Lies"; Lyceum, "Daddies"; Lyric, "The Unknown Purple"; Manhattan Opera House, "The Voice of McConnell"; Maxine Elliott's, "Tea for Three"; Morosco, "Remnant"; New Amsterdam, "The Girl Behind the Gun"; New Amsterdam Roof, "Combination Frolic"; Nora Bayes, "Ladies First"; Playhouse, "Forever After"; Plymouth, "Redemption"; Princess, "Oh, My Dear"; Republic, "Roads of Destiny"; Selwyn, "The Crowded Hour"; Shubert, "The Betrothal"; Thirty-ninth Street, "Keep It to Yourself"; Vanderbilt, "The Gentile Wife"; Winter Garden, "Sinbad."

FLORENCE REED in "ROADS of DESTINY"

WILLIAM GILLETTE, THE AUTHOR.

WHEN the average theatregoer's attention is called to William Gillette it is usually as an actor. The mind recalls some of his most important successes, and he is seen as an important figure in a play. But had Mr. Gillette, who is now acting in Barrie's latest contribution to the theatre, "Dear Brutus," never appeared on the stage, he would have won fame as an author. There have been actors who have written plays, but none who has written so many as has Mr. Gillette. In fact, there are few dramatists of note in this country who have written so many successful plays as has this actor. And his fame as an author and as an actor is by no means confined to this country, for he has had several engagements in London.



PAULINE HALL in "THE CANARY"

It would seem in reviewing Mr. Gillette's career as if he must be an exceptionally modest man. It is to be granted that modesty in any one connected with the theatre is a most unusual trait and one to be commended. A man connected with one of his companies said of him once that he apparently disliked seeing his name in type. At any rate he has never been interviewed for publication, not that he dislikes the interviewer, but because he never could see the necessity of airing his views and opinions or the importance of doing so from any point of view.

Mr. Gillette was born in Hartford, Conn., and while still a student at Yale made a trip to New Orleans in 1875 and appeared in "Across the Continent." He loved the theatre. Returning North he made what he considers his first professional appearance at the Globe Theatre in Boston in "Faint Heart Ne'er Won Fair Lady."

His father, a former United States Senator, did not approve of a stage career and was very much put out when through the efforts of their neighbor, Mark Twain, young Gillette obtained an engagement to appear at the Boston Museum in "The Gilded Age." Then followed appearances in several Shakespearian plays and a hit in Gilbert's "Broken Hearts." Mr. Gillette next got an engagement with Ben Macauley's company, which divided its time between Cincinnati and Louisville. It was in 1877 that the young actor made his first appearance in New York at the New Park Theatre, playing the role of the *Prosecuting Attorney* in "The Gilded Age."

Mr. Gillette's first play was "The Professor," which scored a decided hit. After it had run its course he appeared as Job McCosh in "Digby's Secretary," which play he adapted from Von Moser's "Der Bibliothekar," the source from which Charles Hawtrey had adapted "The Private Secretary."

At the Criterion Theatre, Brooklyn, on Washington's Birthday, 1886, Mr. Gillette presented his third play, "Held by the Enemy," in which he appeared as Thomas Henry Bean. This play was subsequently produced at the Madison Square Theatre in August, 1886, and was acted at the Princess Theatre, London, on April 9, 1887. "All the Comforts of Home," which was taken from the German, was presented in 1890, "Wilkinson's Widows" in 1891, "Settled Out of Court," from the French, in 1892, and "Ninety Days" in 1893.

One of the author's popular plays in which he appeared was "Too Much Johnson," which was given for a long time at the Standard Theatre. This piece he presented in London in 1898. At the Garrick Theatre on October 5, 1896, the actor-author made his first appearance as *Lewis Dumont* in "Secret Service." This play he presented in London in 1897. At the Garrick Theatre, November 6, 1899, he produced "Sherlock Holmes" with great success, which success he repeated when he appeared in the play at the Lyceum, London, on September 9 1901.

It was in 1903 that he assumed a role not written by himself, that of the hero of Barrie's satirical comedy "The Admirable Crichton." Mr. Gillette wrote a one act play, "The Painful Predicament of Sherlock Holmes," which was presented at a benefit at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1905, and this was followed by "Clarice," which he presented in London. Mr. Gillette made the adaptation from the French of "Samson," in which he was seen, and also wrote "The Robber," "Among Thieves," "Electricity," and rearranged "Diplomacy," in which he toured with Blanche Bates and Marie Doro.

One of the great Madison Square Theatre successes was "Esmeralda," which Mr. Gillette wrote in collaboration with Mrs. F. H. Burnett. He also made an adaptation of Mrs. Ward's "Robert Elsmere."

Mr. Gillette is a delightful man once you know him, but it is hard to get close enough to him to ever know him. He is not a man of very robust health, but says he never felt better in his life than he does just now, and his appearance gives assurance of this.

ISABELLE LOWE in "THE MELTING of MOLLY"

MARION GREY in "THREE FACES EAST"

FLORENCE NASH in "REMNANT"

OPENING PERFORMANCE OF THE WEEK.

MONDAY—Henry Miller's Theatre: "Tillie," a genre comedy of life in a Pennsylvania Dutch settlement, adapted by Helen R. Martin and Frank Howe, Jr., from Mrs. Martin's novel, "Tillie," a Mennonite maid. Patricia Collinge, who created the title role in "Pollyanna" is elevated to stardom as *Tillie*, and the cast includes John W. Ransome, Robert Hudson, Maude Granger, Mildred Booth, Adolph Link, Alfred Kappeler, Charles R. Burrows, Harry A. Fisher, Edward S. Forbes, J. C. Kline, Petra Folkman, Dresser Valentine and Abbott Roland.

THE FIRST ESSENTIAL.

By WILLIAM COLLIER.

IF any one would write for the stage I would advise him first of all to learn how to observe. There is no limit to the career of an author gifted with a sense of humor who knows how to observe persons and things. The stage wants types, characters, surprises. It is eager for the man with the gift of observation to arrange these elements into an entertaining and consistent story.

Of course what I have to say concerns comedy. I leave the serious drama and the play of unpleasant problems to those whose nature doesn't yearn for a laugh.

If you would write for the theatre of that great multitude which seeks relaxation from overwork or from the boredom of idleness, go out into the highways and the byways and observe.

Study subway and elevated guards, street car conductors or conductorettes, chauffeurs, bricklayers, elevator operators, telephone girls, clubmen, tramps and ticket speculators.

And don't forget that every play must have the love element, the eternal feminine. The average person who rises at 7, goes to work at 8, lunches at 12, goes home at 6 and to bed at 10 isn't a stage personage—unless he has mannerisms, eccentricities of speech, gesture or attire. Even these peculiarities must be exaggerated, for the stage cannot wait too long for the unfolding of a character.

A dozen individuals must be created and fixed for the audience and their careers worked out in the space of two hours. The playwright must touch only the high lights, giving spectators the self-satisfaction of filling in the details.

Extreme types, however, must be avoided. All of us have met in real life men and women of such marked eccentricities that if they were portrayed to life on the stage an audience would swear they never existed. The element of surprise is essential. When a man is most serious turn the mood into comedy by a deft retort. The sense of humor, above all, is necessary, because what might appear to be tragic to the participant in a scene in real life may be made ludicrous on the stage by a touch of humor.

For a stage character clothes are a great essential. On one occasion I was in search of a certain overcoat for a new comedy part for weeks. One day a man came in to measure me for a wig. I could have fallen on his neck, for he wore the very old coat that in a hazy way I had begun to picture on myself. I bought it as he wore it for $9, the price he asked, telling him to bring it around the next day, all the time contemplating a complete fumigation the moment the overcoat came into my possession.

True to his promise, the man brought his coat around the next day—all carefully cleaned and pressed and with every vestige of character removed from it. The garment was worthless to me, of course, in that form.

Now, there is a little incident, in itself worthy of the stage. It was a touch of character, some comedy and the element of surprise in it.

A SUCCESSOR TO ELLEN TERRY.

MRS. RUSS WHYTAL, who is Alice Brady's mother in "Forever After" at the Playhouse, like many other players, received her early training in the stock companies. Seasons back Mrs. Whytal, then Marie Knowles, was leading woman of one of the best known stock organizations in the country, that which flourished under the direction of George Holland at the old Girard Avenue Theatre in Philadelphia. Following a long engagement there, Mrs. Whytal starred with her husband for three years in a variety of plays, and then went to England, where she spent fifteen years on the English stage.

In London Mrs. Whytal was accorded the unusual honor of being selected to succeed Ellen Terry at His Majesty's Theatre, and there played virtually all the Shakespearean heroines opposite Sir Herbert Tree.

"That was not only an honor, but also a rather unique experience," she said the other night at the Playhouse, "and it was the second time I had succeeded Miss Terry. The first time I succeeded her in 'Alice Sit by the Fire,' playing in the Duke of York's Theatre in London, and later went on tour. Miss Terry was appearing with Sir Herbert at the time, playing Hermoine in 'A Winter's Tale.' Contracts had been made some time before calling for her appearance in America, and she had to end her engagement at His Majesty's.

"Sir Herbert immediately began looking about for a leading woman, and Barrie very kindly recommended me. I was touring the provinces, and Sir Herbert sent various emissaries to watch my performance. Finally, at Folkstone, came an offer, or rather an invitation, to go to London and meet Sir Herbert and others.

"I had little idea of the procedure in such cases, but I did know it was very hard for an American to secure an engagement at His Majesty's. I went up to London and there met Sir Herbert and some ten or more other gentlemen interested in the financial and artistic operation of the theatre. They were gathered as a sort of supreme council to pass on my fitness, and I had an idea they expected me to recite Shakespeare for them, principally to discover if I possessed a Yankee twang. I told them I'd no intention of reciting, and that if they wanted to judge they must do so from hearing me talk in ordinary fashion.

"They agreed, and shortly I was given a contract. But it was a contract that, while placing me under a yearly salary, called only for my appearance in Shakespearean roles. When I inquired the reason I found the supreme council had decided I had no accent, but that I did have a Yankee inflection, and that would never do in modern English plays done at His Majesty's. It would pass unnoticed when reading blank verse, but the modern drama was another thing. I opened as Hermoine in 'A Winter's Tale,' and thereafter played some twelve weeks of Shakespeare a year. That was all I could do, for while my compensation went on week by week I appeared only in the Shakespearean revivals, and had the rest of the time to myself.

"I've had a great deal of experience playing Shakespeare," Mrs. Whytal continued. "When I first went on the stage I was with Modjeska and Julia Marlowe, playing small parts. Then I went to Philadelphia and played all the Shakespearean roles. It was wonderful training, and it was partly because of that training Sir Herbert engaged me to follow Miss Terry. If you don't know the traditions of Shakespeare and haven't been brought up in it you can't ever hope to play it, and there's little use trying."

Mrs. Whytal returned to this country some three years ago, and prior to her appearance in "Forever After" appeared prominently in another Brady production, "The Man Who Came Back."

PATRICIA COLLINGE in "TILLIE"

Where the Plays Change.

The French Theatre du Vieux Colombier will present this week the fourth play of Moliere's that it has given this season. It is "L'Avare," which enjoyed great favor in last season's repertory. Charles Dullin is entrusted with the role of the suspicious miser.

The Shakespeare Playhouse announces Walter Hampden in "Hamlet" for two special matinees at the Plymouth Theatre this week, on Friday afternoon at 2:30, and on Saturday morning at 10:30 o'clock.

Chauncey Olcott still holds the boards at the Manhattan Opera House in George M. Cohan's breezy comedy, "The Voice of McConnell." The Irish favorite has increased the circle of his admirers with this new vehicle.

David Warfield will appear at the Standard in "The Auctioneer," David Belasco's production of the comedy by Lee Arthur and Charles Klein, in which Mr. Warfield first made a deep impression seventeen years ago.

Owing to the large business done by "Business Before Pleasure" at the Shubert-Riviera, Al. Woods and the Shuberts will continue the engagement of this play here for another week.

The attraction at Loew's Seventh Avenue Theatre will be "Seven Days Leave," the spectacular English melodrama that was first presented here at the Park Theatre.